



**Ohio House Finance Committee
Interested Party Written Testimony
HB 96- State Operating Budget
February 27, 2025**

Caylan Stevens, Program Director, Communities In Schools of Ohio

Chair Stewart, Vice Chair Dovilla, and Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Communities In Schools of Ohio's funding request in the operating budget.

My name is Caylan Stevens, and I am a Program Manager with Communities In Schools of Ohio. I currently oversee the work of eight of our Site Coordinators within seven schools, who are in the schools all day every day, identifying the barriers our students are facing and providing services and supports to address those barriers so our students can get to school, stay in school, and engage in learning while in school. Prior to my role as Program Manager, I served as a Site Coordinator for nearly six years.

I truly appreciate the opportunity to share insights into the work of CIS happening in schools, along with feedback from educators on the impact of Communities In Schools of Ohio on their students and overall school environment.

The first story I want to share is of a student referred to CIS at the end of the first quarter this school year. Last year, this student experienced two significant losses within their family leading to challenges with both behavior and attendance. As a result, they accumulated 22 referrals, with half leading to out-of-school suspensions, further negatively affecting their grades and attendance.

We are halfway through this current school year and the student is down to six referrals with zero out of school suspensions on their record. Attendance is up from 72% last year to 96%. With a lot of one-on-one support, meetings and phone calls home, the CIS site coordinator built a strong relationship with the student and their guardians.

Academically, this student had a 0.4 at the end of last school year and started this year with a 1.8 GPA for Quarter 1. In Quarter 2, they raised that GPA to a 3.3! The student has developed a good relationship with school administration thanks to mediation and advocacy from the site coordinator. The site coordinator has connected the student to resources and support such as Nationwide Children's Hospital for counseling. The students' guardian also reported relationships being better at home and how it's been exciting to watch the student's journey and celebrate their success. The student's younger sibling also reached out to the site coordinator and wanted the same support because they saw how well their sibling was doing!

To share one more recent story – even in my new role as Program Manager, I have maintained close relationships with several former students and families. One family that comes to mind is a grandmother raising her five grandchildren on her own. These grandchildren range in age from 2 years old to 15 years old. Whether it's guiding grandmother through changes in her benefits and next steps, continuing to provide academic and behavioral support for a former student, collaborating with other site coordinators currently working with the students' siblings, or simply being there during difficult times - like attending the funeral service when the students mother passed away - I remain a constant source of support.

She knows she can always reach out to me, and I will do everything in my power to assist her and her family.

A principal at one of our partner schools recently shared how much value their CIS Site Coordinator has added to the school. According to her, "some students have completely turned their behaviors around because of his presence" and the parents voted for him to receive the "Helping Hands" award this year.

Another principal stated that "our students and families need people to help them navigate all the rough waters that can come along in the 7th and 8th grade. Our CIS team members provide that help and much, much more. We have students who are thriving due to our coordinator's efforts to mentor them through the hard times and celebrate the little wins along the way. CIS plays an invaluable role at FMS".

Our founder, Bill Millken famously states "Programs don't change people, relationships do." Communities In Schools of Ohio embodies that every day.

